

Material geographies

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1. Introduction.

If you were writing a review chapter about material geographies now, you'd probably have to begin by saying that geographers' engagements with materiality had recently become the topic of widespread and sometimes heated debate. You'd point out that a steady trickle of articles had appeared in recent years by geographers (critiquing the) 'materialising', 're-materialising' or 'returning' to the materialities of (various elements of) their discipline (see Jackson: 2000; Lees: 2002; Cook & Harrison: 2003, Latham & McCormack: 2005; Browne: 2004; Bakker & Bridge: 2006; Whatmore: 2006; Colls: 2007; Hoskins: 2007). You might point out other kinds of writing, like the ten books in Ashgate's *Re-materialising cultural geography* series,ⁱ or the recent undergraduate Human Geography textbook with the material cultural geographies chapter (Crang: 2005). After that, you'd have to mention the numerous conference sessions with those key words in their titles, as well as the 'Material Geographies' conference at University College London in September 2002 and the ongoing 'Geography and Materiality' workshop series held in Birmingham and Durham in Decembers 2006 and 2007. Then, you'd have to explain what was distinctively 'geographical' about these materialities. So, you might argue that some of this work tries to rework distinctive 'material' traditions in geography – like that associated with Carl Sauer's in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g. Crang: 2005; Whatmore: 2006) – and that geographers have recently been trying to think through their discipline – often divided neatly down the middle into 'physical' and 'human' geography – in a more materially interconnected way (e.g. Harrison, Massey *et al*: 2004; Harrison, Pile & Thrift: 2004; Bakker & Bridge: 2006; Harrison *et al*: 2006). But, then, you'd have to note that it's no longer acceptable to think of matter, or the material, or materiality, as the "unmediated, static, physicality that continues to dominate ... some of the natural sciences" or any "ostensive social structure that over-determines 'the cultural'" (Anderson & Tolia Kelly: 2004, 670; Kearnes: 2003, Anderson & Wylie: 2008, Bakker & Bridge: 2006).

We ought to be able to write such a review. Divya co-organised that 'Material Geographies' conference (see Anderson & Tolia-Kelly: 2004). Ian is co-organising that 'Geography and Materiality' series. Both of us have convened and taught undergraduate modules on material geographies (see Cook *et al*: 2007). But, we do things quite differently, from each other, and from others. So, we have tried to put this chapter together in a way that will "build bridges and .. move discussion forward" (Jackson: 2000, 9). To force ourselves to do this, we decided to organise our reading and writing with and through a widely reported and unexpectedly unfolding news story that began in early 2007. Then, a stricken cargo ship called the *MSC Napoli* was run aground in Lyme Bay - part of a stretch of heritage landscape in the South West of England called the *Jurassic Coast* - and its containers began to wash up on the beach of the tiny 'honeypot' village of Branscombe. What, we have asked each other, might some of our better-read students have made of this?; and what ideas, approaches, skills, politics, world-views and

attentions to detail exemplified in different authors' writing might come to mind? In the following pages, we have used the 'Napoli story' - as told in the local, national and international media - to think through three areas of geographical engagement with 'materiality' and 'mattering': in relations, first, between landscapes and national identities, second, between spaces of commodity consumption and trade, and, third, through the 'afterlives' of the wreck in art and artefact. Before we get into this, however, we need to set this scene in more detail...

2. Napoli grounding

The *MSC Napoli* was a 62,000 tonne container ship on its way from the English port of Felixtowe via Antwerp, Le Havre and Las Palmas to Cape Town, South Africa. On board were 26 crew and 2,394 40-foot containers, half of which were to be unloaded in South African ports. Inside them, were a strange assortment of cargoes: VW car parts, face cream, nickel, Xhosa bibles, pet food, fertiliser, and an awful lot more.ⁱⁱ The *Napoli* was due to dock in Cape Town on January 29th. But, on the 18th, it got caught up in a storm in the English Channel, was holed and had to be abandoned. It subsequently developed 'severe structural failure' as it was being towed East through continuing storms for repairs. So, on January 20th, it was beached in the sheltered waters of Lyme Bay to prevent it breaking up at sea, and causing an environmental catastrophe. For centuries, Lyme Bay had been "a place where mariners know you go for refuge when there is a storm",ⁱⁱⁱ and its shallow, sandy waters were ideal beaching grounds as they could keep a stricken ship intact. Soon, a 200 tonne, five mile long oil slick from the wreck was threatening rare marine species, and led to the deaths of three dolphins and over 1,000 seabirds unable to fly, dive for food or float properly because they were covered in oil, or poisoned because they had ingested it.^{iv} This event gained international fame, however, after the stormy seas caused the ship to list by 35 degrees and lose 103 containers overboard, 50 of which washed up on Branscombe beach. Local people began to help themselves to their contents and, after reports of some taking away brand new BMW motorbikes reached the national media, thousands more joined them from as far away as Belgium in what became a "big self-service party".^v The legality of this mass 'salvage', 'beachcombing', 'treasure-hunting', 'scavenging' or 'looting' quickly became an issue. Goods removed from the beach had to be reported to the official 'Receiver of the wreck'. Perhaps the most widely reported story in the international press^{vi} went as follows:

"Anita Bokdal, 60, and husband Jan, 58, run a landscaping business near native Stockholm and a winery in South Africa and were shipping personal belongings to South Africa on *MSC Napoli* 'to make it feel like home'. Instead, she watched in horror as her container was broken open and paintings, embroideries, a Rosenthal tea set and carpets were removed. ... Mrs Bokdal appealed to anyone who took two embroidered pictures made by her father-in-law to return them as they have great sentimental value. 'There was also a hand-made copper table, like a tray, which came from Jan's grandmother.'^{vii}

In the weeks and months that followed, the containers remaining on board were removed, others washed up on the beach during fresh storms, a massive clean-up operation was mounted, and a salvage company was breaking the *Napoli* into pieces, to be towed to shipyard in Belfast, Northern Ireland, for 'recycling'.^{viii}

Beyond the time-frame of these single days and weeks, the 'Napoli story' continued to be told and retold. The whole event had been documented by a local history group called the *Branscombe Project* - headed by retired heritage anthropologist Barbara Bender^{ix} – who, in October 2007, staged a *Napoli* exhibition in Branscombe's Village Hall.^x A month later, it was the basis of an installation by Melanie Jackson in an exhibition called *Human Cargo: the Transatlantic Slave Trade, its Abolition and Contemporary Legacies in Plymouth and Devon*, in Plymouth's City Museum and Art Gallery.^{xi} And, in February 2008, Devon County Council initiated a public inquiry to consider the impact of, issues raised by, and ways of preventing any future, *Napoli* disaster.^{xii} For us, this 'disaster' and its after-effects illustrate some of the complexities of recent material geographical scholarship that we should be covering here. The *Napoli*'s multiple materialities became the subject of widespread attention, excitement, debate, concern, manipulation, more. But what literatures might geographers have drawn on to help make sense of them? We start with issues raised by *this* wreck disgorging its cargo in *this* place...

3. *Landscape stories...*

The beaching of the *Napoli* was controversial because it spilled its cargo onto the *Jurassic Coast*, the 'beautiful wild landscape'^{xiii} that was the UK's first UNESCO World Heritage site,^{xiv} a site "made famous by Thomas Hardy as *Dead Man's Bay* in his fictional Wessex".^{xv} Historically renowned by fossil-hunters, UNESCO recognised the 'natural heritage' of this 95 mile stretch of coast, as its exposures provide "an almost continuous sequence of Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous rock formations spanning the Mesozoic Era and document approximately 185 million years of Earth history".^{xvi} The *Jurassic Coast* website boasts that its coastal footpath "offers the walker stunning views, with a bird's eye view of many coastal features ... the drama of sheer cliff faces, ... the strangely eroded rock formations and above all, ... the geology."^{xvii} What the disaster brought to light here, however, were clashes between constructions of this landscape's official, 'natural' heritage, and its more popular, 'cultural' heritage in which "Salvage has always been part of life on this rugged Devon coast".^{xviii} Newspapers reported that only seven of the containers that initially washed onto the beach broke open on their own. The rest were "smashed open" by the "gangs [who] descended", "scattering the containers' contents across the pebble beach",^{xix} "litter[ing] the World Heritage Site"^{xx} and increasing the wreck's "damage to the environment by 800%".^{xxi} This turned Branscombe residents' "whole world ... upside down".^{xxii} Many scavengers reported getting caught up in the excitement of this 'free-for-all'. One recalled, "We don't make a habit of doing things like this",^{xxiii} while another said, "I took a jelly shoe and [some] photos, and saw people taking personal things away, it was horrifying".^{xxiv} The local coastguard office described this behaviour as "crass greed".^{xxv} Local journalists likened those who took things from the beach to "a plague of locusts sweeping through the village" or "vultures picking over the entrails of Branscombe".^{xxvi} Anita Bokdal said that the people who took her possessions "had behaved 'like a lot of savages'",^{xxvii} and a local man described what he'd witnessed as "human nature at its worst".^{xxviii} In the future, local politicians argued, one aspect of this landscape's 'heritage' needed to be protected from the other. As one put it, "This is a World Heritage site. We don't want every sinking ship brought in here".^{xxix}

All of these various claims and discourses are about cultures of being that are acceptable. How we act in a landscape, what we do, 'who' we are perceived to be enables us to move in it, appropriate it and to shape the narratives that are told through it. The triangulation of national heritage, national culture and embodied citizenship are played out through the responses to the materials beached here, the reflections on the economies and flows of stuff and capital, and the moral geographies of the landscape, nature and the folk that make up local society and their culture. According to Doreen Massey (2006), landscapes - although touchable and seemingly permanent - should be appreciated as 'liquid'. This is how geographers are now tending to interrogate matter in place and space: as mobile, and converging at points of encounter. The American cultural geographer Carl Sauer (1996/1925) treated the morphology of landscape as evidence of the material lives, material cultures, social rhythms and cultural heritage of the people who had lived upon it. The natural landscape - its material presence - could explain and illustrate social, moral and cultural values of a nation and/or region. And this taxonomy translated to the typologies of people living upon the land and the cultures that they practiced. The *Jurassic* and other coasts of the British Isles could be - and have been - interpreted as landscapes that are physically, culturally, timelessly and patriotically 'British' (Tilley 2006). For cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1999, 4), this view of "Heritage thus becomes the material embodiment of the spirit of nation, a collective representation of the British version of tradition, a concept pivotal to the lexicon of [national] virtues". The material of land, soil and nature become woven into the story of Britain, almost as a bedrock. Yet, as historical geographers like David Harvey (2003) have argued, we can learn a great deal more about national identities through critically examining the 'heritage of heritage', unravelling the seemingly benign and 'natural' embeddedness of its values, and questioning the ways in which 'heritage' can politically exclude 'others' from the national story (see also Johnson: 2000). Understandings of the physical materialities of landscapes have served as blurry subtexts to mythologies materialising nationality via notions of bounded senses of belonging, of a 'natural' flora, fauna species, architecture, peoples, languages and races (Tolia-Kelly: 2007). Physical bodies, cells, blood groups and DNA, for example, have become the material tools for evidencing 'proper' national citizens, 'proper women' (Colls: 2004) or a British race (Holloway: 2003; 2004; 2005; Nash: 2005a) belonging to a national landscape (R.J.C. Young, 2007). The collision between the material bodies of 'other' cultures and of the native 'national' culture have been shown to be present in modern day tourism (Johnson: 2004; Saldanha: 2007). Here the materialities of race, of the racialised body, and the racialised cultures of that body have been seen as concretized through exclusion (Agyeman and Neal: 2006), the epistemological violence of the tourist industry (Code: 2006), and the national cultures of landscape (Daniels: 1993) and Englishness (Darby: 2000; Matless: 1998). Here landscapes are *nationalized* and the nation *naturalized* (Jazeel: 2005; Kaufmann: 1998).

As part of this push to understand the heritage of heritage, geographers and others have argued that it is part of a nation's economy as much as it is of its history. Hall (2000), for example, has argued that who is catered for, which transport routes are funded, and what facilities are provided shape and re-shape the access to the landscape, but also perpetuate questions of whose heritage is reproduced. Heritage landscapes can therefore be seen as encountered both through branding and

through embodied experience. Stories of a past that can be unlocked through walking, fossil hunting, imagining and gazing and recreated through embodied encounters with it, have evolved in relation to films, toys and the currency of dinosaurs in their natural world, 185 million years ago (in this respect, as Rocksborough-Smith 2001 argues, the popular success of the *Jurassic Coast* and of Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* were, in the 1990s, not unrelated). Such physical nature and landscape, we could argue, serves as a site for textual practice, upon and through which narratives are written, where the texture, natures, forms and feel of the landscape become tools for the narrator as opposed to being felt, experienced or encountered before or beyond narrative. Here, narratives of 'heritage' site and 'Jurassic' time combine to compound an alternative 'real', a narration that abstracts the material space of this stretch of Devon and Dorset coastline to serve a discourse of the gigantic (Stewart: 1993), its scale of excess and enormity making it more than the sum of its parts. But what of those writers who argue that matter is always fluid, in the process of *becoming*, and cannot be experienced as a known material? Jane Bennett (2001), for example, pushes us to consider the animatedness, liveliness and enchantment in/of people's encounters with landscapes and other things; to engage with memories of other times and spaces embedded within the experience of these encounters as landscapes and other things refract, emanate and sometimes 'magically' transport us to other sites (see Luke: 2000; Tolia-Kelly: 2004a&b; Hill: 2007). John Wylie, in his (2005, 236) paper walking along this very coast path, sets out a phenomenology of landscape experience which "aims to spotlight tones, texts and topographies from which distinctive articulations of self and landscape [can] arise". The coastal pathway is inhabited by the silent traveler aware of his/her embodied encounters between feet and path, meteorology and emotion (see also Macpherson in press). Here, people's engagements with materials are shaped ontologically, through various knowledges, memories, histories and discourses that come before such encounters. The material world has a presence which asserts itself despite and before such mental and imaginative realms. Thus, as Kearnes (2003) argues, it is necessary to adhere to its agency and mechanisms of being felt, known and encountered.

What the *Napoli* and its cargo did, then, was to both wreck and bring out into the open many of these landscape relations. While, with time, the wreck will no doubt become a *naturalised* story of Branscombe, throughout 2007 it was repulsive to the region's notions of itself as a *Jurassic coast* characterised by natural beauty and leisure. The contents of its containers were re-written as vile detritus; anti-human in nature and flow into the sites of a mediated heritage story. But it did attract more 'out of season' visitors to the area. The fact that many were seen to have exhibited behaviors, attitudes and interests that were not welcome revealed a particular moral geography to the acceptable face of visitor culture, motivation and conduct. The 'plague' of visitors was uncivilised, unworthy of a Devon welcome, and - by being called 'savages' or 'locusts' - they were positioned as 'non-people'. Demeaning bodies in this way is what, Sarah Holloway (2005, 2007) argues, most often occurs when referring to 'other' bodies, considered not of the land or of the national race. The *Napoli* disaster left Branscombe vulnerable to this kind of invasion, and the way in which these visitors valued and appropriated the goods washed up was discordant with the values of those celebrated in newspaper narrations of regional citizenship and 'national civility' (see Gilroy: 1991; Daniels: 1993). Sheller and Urry (2006) argue that the vicariousness of moving bodies and matter situates them as different, uncommon

in contrast to notions of stable consensual citizens in society. Where matter is suddenly displaced, suddenly 'out of place', it is defiling and contaminating despite not changing form or aesthetics (Bikerstaff and Walker: 2003). Here, we could argue, both the debris of the *Napoli* and the new visitors were positioned as one. Their mobility rendered them a risk to stasis and consensual citizenry status. Derogatory discourse was attached to these mobile, non-native and 'other' materials. Visitors' bodies were equalized with the oil, rubbish, commodities and debris of the *Napoli*. All were material equals in the narration of the accident as wholly unwelcome. Such *non-citizens* are encountered in the everyday geopolitics of the street; single mums, muslim clerics, asylum seekers are all examples of non-material citizens, disembodied, and articulated through text disassociated with names, families and real biographies. It is perhaps easier to imagine how the literature in this area of human geography might enable us to critically address the 'Napoli story'. But, we also need to ask how that story might critically engage that literature. Next, though, we turn to look more carefully at the *Napoli* and the cargo it spilled onto the shore.

4. Washed up commodities...

The English Channel is the busiest shipping lane in the world. Container ships pass by this stretch of England's coast every day. Their cargoes are mysterious, even for those working on board (Sekula 2003). So, when one runs aground, its containers wash up on the beach, and its various cargoes spill out, we have a fascinating insight into world trade. Exactly what was being taken to South Africa from these European ports? What connections, which might not ordinarily be questioned, came to light through this disaster? All kinds of commodities, in all stages of their lives, were washed up. Brand new motorbikes. Car parts. Flip flops. Empty oak wine barrels. Nappies. Packets of biscuits covered in oil. Bibles. Personal possessions. Second hand clothes. Much more. For sale to the public, to other companies, within companies, or for distribution, exchange and (re)use in other ways. Relying on just-in-time production, the South African VW factory waiting for those parts had to slow down production for two weeks.^{xxx} The South African vineyards waiting for those oak barrels, would have "great difficulty", having to wait several weeks for a new shipment too.^{xxxi} Those, like the Bokdals, who had shipped their possessions had lost not only uniquely personal things – photos, tea-sets, furniture, embroidered pictures – but also memories of people, relationships, life events.^{xxxii} Often, they were desperate to get them back. Yet, for people scavenging that beach, these things had no such histories and connections. This was a 'treasure trove'. These containers and their contents had appeared unexpectedly, out of nowhere. They were taken and given new lives. And/or returned to the authorities. Sometimes. Birds ate the biscuits (and the oil covering them). And then there was the *Napoli* itself. A massive commodity, produced in South Korea, 'consumed' (or used) all around the world, and now wrecked, ready for salvage, or 'recycling'. Broken up at sea, and towed to a shipyard in Belfast, Northern Ireland. This is the sort of event that brings to life, and perhaps questions, work that's been done on the (material) geographies of commodities.

Commodity geographies are, in many ways, nothing new. Anthropologist Daniel Miller (2003), for instance, recalls a school geography class in which he "watched well-meaning videos of smiling plantation workers followed by the arrival of cocoa by ship to Britain where it was turned into bars of chocolate". But, after lying low for "a generation or more in ... the dusty backrooms of economic geography", these geographies have made a "striking resurgence" in the

discipline (Bridge and Smith: 2003, 257; Jackson 1999, 2002). The materialities of the commodities studied have not always been centre stage in this work, but there are two main areas in which they have been. First, there are studies of the material cultural geographies of consumption (see Jackson & Thrift 1995), in which - for example - ethnographic studies of the acquisition, wearing, tidying, sorting and divestment of clothes has provided a lens through which to make wider senses of relations between emotional and embodied experiences, memories and individual/collective identities within and between the spaces, places and times of people's lives (e.g. Gregson & Beale: 2004; Gregson & Crewe: 1997, 2003; Colls: 2004, 2006; Gregson *et al* 2007). Second, there are cultural-economic studies of commodity chains, circuits or networks, in which multi-sited ethnographic research has been undertaken to piece together 'social lives of things' (see Appadurai: 1986; Harvey: 1990) like - for example - cut flowers, food and clothes which comprise stories of everyday exploitations, inequalities, value-contestations and consumers' reliance on countless 'unseen others' around the world to enable them to live the lives they live every day (e.g. Long & Villareal: 1998; Lind & Barham: 2004; Hughes: 2000; Miller: 2003; Cook *et al*: 2004; Cook & Harrison 2007; Foster: 2006; Benson & Fischer: 2007; Crewe: 2008). Much of this work has drawn upon arguments about material cultural studies serving as lenses through which to appreciate complex relations between wider, deeper and more abstract processes (Miller: 1998; Jackson: 2000; Crang *et al*: 2003; Cook *et al*: 2006; Crewe: 2008), and, thereby, as means to critique 'applications' of political economic - and other - theory (Marcus: 1995; Carrier & Miller: 1998; Leyshon *et al*: 2003). Yet, Marxian concepts of 'alienation' and 'commodity fetishism', post-structural understandings of the liveliness and excess of 'matter' and the co-agency of humans and non-humans, and the political 'edges' that such approaches possess, continue to animate much of the debate (Leslie & Reimer: 1999; Hartwick: 2000; Jackson: 2000, 2002; Castree: 2003; Kirsch & Mitchell: 2004; Page: 2005; Foster: 2006; Bakker & Bridge: 2006; Goss: 2006; Cook *et al*: 2002, 2007; Hitchings: 2007). Finally, the effects that different forms of academic 'production' - theorising, fieldwork, 'story-telling', dissemination, collaboration - (can) have on their 'consumers' - students and other publics - has been the subject of much conjecture and some experimentation as authors consider how, when, where, if the connective aesthetics of such work can inspire audiences, confuse them, spark them into action, overwhelm them, encourage senses of connection, responsibility and care, recognise differences already being made, and so on (see Cook & Crang: 1996; Hughes & Reimer: 1999, 2003; Hartwick: 1998, 2000; Angus *et al*: 2001; Friedberg: 2003; Miller: 2003, 2006; Castree: 2004; Gough: 2004; Barnes: 2006; Le Billon: 2006; Cook *et al*: 2000, 2007; Barnett & Land: 2007; Evans *et al*: 2008).

While these material cultural geographies have, arguably, made considerable headway within and beyond the discipline (see Miller 2003; Slater & Miller 2006; Foster 2006), a number of limitations have also been pointed out. First, there is the argument that they are primarily consumption-based, with relatively few studies attempting to appreciate not only the roles that commodities play in other aspects of (other) people's lives (e.g. notably producers, but also designers, distributors, sellers, repairers, disposers, collectors, re-sellers, thieves, counterfeiters, etc), but also the ways in which companies and other organisations also act as the 'consumers' of goods which are often not available on any 'open' market (Gregson & Crewe 1997; Crewe & Gregson 2003; Pratt 2004; Hetherington 2004; Bakker & Bridge 2006; Rusten & Bryson 2007).

Second, treating commodities as entities that have 'biographies' has been deemed problematic, partly because of the danger of object fetishism that comes with attributing agency to non-human things, and partly because of the impression that can be given that commodities are discrete, stable, bounded entities with simple, identifiable 'origins' and destinations, rather than entities which are (part of) more complex assemblages (Boge 1995; Cook & Crang 1996; Cook et al 2004; Latham & McCormack 2005; Bakker & Bridge 2006; Cook & Harrison 2007; Reimer & Leslie 2008). Third, critics have identified a tendency for researchers to study heavily advertised / fetishised, 'cultural' or 'discretionary' commodities – primarily food and/or clothing (often 'fairly' traded) but also furniture, gold and diamonds – and to ignore 'hidden' and/or more 'industrial' commodities like sugar, oil, electricity, cars, staple foods, water, timber, pictures, computers, housing, surimi, stainless steel, medicines, the list goes on (Bridge & Smith 2003; Bakker & Bridge 2006; Goss 2006: see Le Billon 2006; Hartwick 1998; Mansfield 2003; Hollander 2003; Doel & Segrott 2004; Tolia-Kelly 2004; Page 2005; McCormack 2007). Fourth, there is a tendency for researchers to study 'consumption' by relatively wealthy people in the global North and 'production' by relatively poor people the global South, leaving this body of work open to accusations of Eurocentrism, of neglecting the material cultural geographies of poorer people, and of neglecting North-North, South-South, and North-South trade (Jaffee *et al*: 2004; although see Miller: 2002; Friedberg: 2005; Kothari & Laurie: 2005; Edensor & Kothari: 2006; Horst & Miller: 2006). Fifth, and finally, it is fair to say that the things studied are usually tangible, solid, stable, touchable, everyday, popular, harmless, small, human-oriented things, commodities which means that things which are (in part) intangible, liquid, gaseous, unstable, on fire, diluted, ephemeral, spooky, experiential, dangerous, massive, miniscule, illegal, for birds, not commodified, and so on tend also to be neglected (although, see Jenkins: 2002; Jacobs 2006).

Back on Branscombe beach, then, there's plenty to think about. Here we have goods spilling from a container ship involved in North-South trade, a ship who - experts said at the time - "virtually beached herself" in Lyme Bay. Powerful stories emerged of the ways in which commodities are involved in the making of places and relationships. First, in terms of memories, personal/social relationships and 'consumption', it showed ways in which the social lives of things stretch way beyond purchase and initial 'consumption'. In the Bokdal's story, the loss of well worn possessions, gifts, family heirlooms and other items clearly illustrated the intimate role of things in making places "feel like home". Yet, by far the main 'consumption' story concerned the 'scavenging' or 'salvage' of commodities that had not yet had the chance to develop those personal lives, that weren't bought through any official channels, that weren't part of a neat display in a shop or dealership, but could end up being part of scavengers' lives or of those they sold things to via other channels, like Ebay or car-boot sales. Although geographers' work on second-hand markets is well developed (see Crewe and Gregson: 2003; Hetherington: 2004), a literature on 'grey' or 'parallel market' goods is developing (see Kothari & Laurie: 2005; Edensor & Kothari: 2006; Yeung & Mok: 2006), the *Napoli* event suggests that important material cultural geographies of (other) places and spaces of questionably legal (or illegal) provision and consumption are missing. Moreover, it also suggests - given the unintended consumption of oil by all of those birds, as well as the washing up on shore of lots of 'Science Plan' food for cats and dogs - that 'consumers' can be accidental and are often more than human. Second, in terms of cultural-economic geographies of trade, with the exception of the second hand clothes that the

Bokdals were shipping to South Africa for 'poor children' (see, again, Crewe & Gregson: 2003; Hetherington: 2004), jeans (see Miller & Woodward: 2007), those BMW motorbikes (see, maybe, Hebdige: 1988 in Crang: 2005), that nickel bound for a stainless steelmaker (see Bakker & Bridge: 2006) and the ship itself (see Gregson *et al*'s ongoing 'Waste of the world' project),^{xxxiii} the *Napoli* was carrying little that (material) commodity geographers have become interested in. This not only adds weight to critiques of this literature as neglecting 'hidden' and/or 'industrial' commodities - where are the studies of exhaust pipes, battery acid, large balls of woollen thread, methyl bromide, or hypodermic syringes? - but also refines them by ask why only certain kinds of 'discretionary' commodities get studied - where are the studies of bibles, nappies, sunglasses, 'L'Oreal Revitalift' cream or bottles of Vodka? We could extend this to ask what roles events and/or commodities have in choosing us to study them, how and why they end up 'mattering' enough for us to want to study them, and what the politics and ethics of these choices might be (see Cook *et al* 2008). Finally, it's important to point out how the media stories of the *Napoli* were also commodities with their own social lives, which helped not only to report but - very clearly - to contribute to the ways in which the *Napoli* 'disaster' unfolded. As a result of the unfolding drama of this attention-grabbing news-story, Branscombe was unexpectedly put 'on the map' and local businesses have cashed in on this: local hoteliers reporting increased bookings, breweries producing *Napoli* ales, boat owners charging tourists for trips around the remains of the wreck, and the village post-office selling souvenir DVDs of the *Napoli* drama (see Ateljevic & Doorne: 2004; Goss: 2004).^{xxxiv} Here, it seems, we have commodifications of an event that are proliferating and gradually becoming naturalised, alongside those dinosaurs, in the *Jurassic Coast*'s changing landscape narrative.

5. Afterlives...

The body of the *Napoli*, its cargo and the impacts of its 'salvage' have continued to inhabit the lives of those on the Devon and Dorset coastline throughout and beyond 2007. They materialised in the spaces of oil slicks, in the homes of Branscombe residents, at local car-boot sales, on eBay, in stories told in pubs, and - what we are going to concentrate on in this last section - in the form of exhibitions in the public spaces of art and artefact. In October 2007, as we mentioned earlier, the *Napoli* disaster had inspired the *Branscombe Project*'s annual exhibition. As its curator, Barbara Bender, explained to journalists, "We camcordered things right from the start, it's a view from the bottom up". Visitors to the Village Hall encountered "hundreds of photographs, press reports, paintings and songs. ... transcripts of interviews with villagers and their thoughts when it seemed that the worlds had descended on their doorstops. [...] ... an art installation made out of salvage from the ship. ... [and a] 'talking heads' DVD, expressing [villagers'] feelings about the ... *Napoli*".^{xxxv} A month later, the *Human Cargo* exhibition in Plymouth was commemorating a much bigger event: the 200th anniversary of the British government's 1807 *Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*. As a museum press release put it, however, "Slavery did not end with the 1807 Act ... and this uncomfortable legacy is addressed with new contemporary interventions by five international artists."^{xxxvi} One, Raimi Gbadamosi, "re-mapped the museum in his own guidebook, challenging the Eurocentric version of history and underlining how other cultures have been looted for their treasures. ... [and] made personal selections from the museum's collection" to group together display case artefacts as spoils of individual collector's travels, rather than by artefact type.^{xxxvii} Another, Jyll Bradley, took "the 'neutral' white walls of

the institution and wallpapered an entire room with her beautifully gaudy yellow and gold Lent Lily design” so that “[r]eferences to the exploitation of workers in the international flower trade become an assertive backdrop to the displays”.^{xxxviii} A third, Fiona Kam, produced “a Treasure Map and competition exploring the links between today’s fair trade campaigners and 19th century Abolitionists, and between fair trade goods and plantation crops”.^{xxxix} The fourth, Lisa Cheung, created a mobile *Sweatshop* sculpture – complete with sewing machines and material - which encouraged and enabled members of the public to design and make parts of a large flag installation raising “issues surrounding consumerism and cheap labour, in particular child labour”.^{xl} And, most interesting for us, Melanie Jackson produced an installation called *The undesirables*, which - “as if washed up in a corner of the museum’s Maritime Collection Gallery gallery entirely by accident” and “in unsettling contrast to a collection of grand paintings confidently celebrating Plymouth’s maritime past” – consisted of a three dimensional paper model of the *Napoli* wreck on the gallery’s parquet floor and, ‘washed up’ in a nearby corner, a “flimsy panorama of etchings” or “paper sculptures” depicting that *Jurassic Coast* landscape, those containers and commodities, the people scavenging them, and the media reporting of that scavenging.^{xli} Jackson had worked with the *Branscombe Project*, “carefully researched the products and goods that appeared there ... used interviews with eyewitnesses ... and interviewed cargo workers at ABP Port of Plymouth about their experience of moving cargo.”^{xlii} She included in the installation “transcripts and recordings” also seen in Branscombe Village Hall, which “offered personal accounts from different eyewitnesses.”^{xliii}

Both of these illustrations of the material geographical afterlives of the *Napoli* disaster could have been neatly fitted into our previous sections as geographies, landscapes, commodities, memories, and identities are tightly interwoven in this chapter. However, they also point us towards the third area of literature that we want to highlight here: where geographers have studied, collaborated with, been and/or become museum and art practitioners. According to Sarah Cant and Nina Morris (2006), there is a long history of geographical interest in art but, what has characterised the past decade of this work, are the ways in which geographers and artists have begun to work closely together (see, for example, Anderson et al, 2001; Driver *et al* 2002; Nash 2005b). As artist Kate Foster and geographer Hayden Lorimer (2007, 425-6), explain:

“...geographers [now] look to artists to help their research ‘outreach’ to communities; geographers have been curators of art exhibitions; artists exhibit and perform at geography conferences, as well as offer papers; university departments host artists’ residencies ; artists contribute to geographers’ research projects; artists employ a spatialised vocabulary to label, describe and explain their work that geographers recognise as their own.”

On top of this, work has emerged from numerous PhD projects (in the UK, at least) co-funded by research councils and museums (see, for example, Toby Butler: 2006, 2007; and Hilary Geoghegan: forthcoming)^{xliv} and from the fact that collaboration is not strictly necessary when geographers also have training and/or life experience as curators and/or artists (like, for example, Trevor Paglen: 2006; Helen Scalway: 2006; Caitlin DeSilvey 2006, 2007 and Kathryn Yusoff 2007).^{xlv} These collaborations and crossovers are many and varied, and include our own work:

Divya collaborating with artist Graham Lowe in the English ‘Lake District’ to “disrupt the moral geography of the landscape as embodying a singular English sensibility, normally exclusionary of British multi-ethnic, translocal and mobile landscape values and sensibilities” (Tolia Kelly: 2007, 329); and Ian working with, and inspired by, artist Shelley Sacks and her ‘social sculpture’ *Exchange values: images of invisible lives*^{xvii} in his work on the ‘connective aesthetics’ of commodity geography ‘education’ (Cook *et al* 2000, 2007). Such work invariably focuses attention on the materialities of geographic and artistic/curatorial practice, and the ways in which these can differently shape, (for want of a better word) ‘capture’ and draw others into research projects.

Four examples will hopefully illustrate this point. First, artist/geographer Helen Scalway (2006, 456) has described the materialities of drawing as a research method for her project ‘A patois for pattern’: “Drawing, like other embodied practices, is a form of corporeal knowing. What I had not foreseen was what it would reveal. At one moment I would find my pen whisking sharply along a steel rule as I sought to re-enact the lines of a rack of metal shelves or lighting unit, the next, the pen went whispering and wandering at an entirely different speed and pressure among the tendrils of a flowery boteh.” Second, cartographer Edward Kinman and ceramic artist John Williams (2007), in a project ‘mapping’ the histories of the land and lives on which their university now stands, talk about the significance of using clay tiles as the ‘canvas’ for their maps. While Williams “was fascinated with clay’s innate ability to record flame patterns in the kiln, the marks of the maker, and the patina of use. Clay had memory” (435), for Kinman, “clay tiles [were] one of the earliest cartographic mediums” and, given the focus on landscape, “wanted to use a material representative of our subject in the artwork. ... we took material from the ground and altered it” (441). Third, in their work on/with theatre group *London Bubble*, geographers Alison Blunt *et al.* (2007) describe what is added to a play about migration by its taking-place in a ‘real’ domestic space. *London Bubble*’s ‘My home’ was performed in a house whose “rich material layering ... suggested the presence of the past in ways which mirrored a central theme of the monologues: memory and the interaction of homes past and present, particularly the relationship between places left behind and current homes” (315; see also Tolia-Kelly 2004a&b). Finally, Caitlin DeSilvey’s (2006, 2007) curatorial/PhD work on a neglected Montana homestead, involved making sense of the lively but decaying materialities of found (and archived) items (see Edensor: 2005; Ogborn: 2004). Here, she writes, for example, about a box of books which had, for decades, been the home of insects, mice and mould: “I could understand the mess as the residue of a system of human memory storage, or I could see an impressive display of animal adaptations to available resources. ... This book-box-nest is neither artefact or ecofact, but both” (2006, 323-4). What we are describing here, perhaps, is part of an emerging field of ‘creative geographies’ combining established and innovative research practices through and beyond writing (see, for example, Wylie forthcoming). Here, geographies of landscape, cultural production, economy, emotion, transport, national belonging, nature, migration, tourism, the sea, and nature can be synthesised through a lens on matter and the tracings of its flows, immanence, agency, emergence and sometimes invisibility or immateriality.

The afterlives of the *Napoli* disaster, as they passed through the exhibitions in Branscombe and Plymouth, seem to illustrate the kinds of collaborations and crossovers that are currently exciting so many geographers. In her academic life, for example, Barbara Bender (1993) has argued that the contested natures of landscapes are part of their meanings and values in the contemporary world: a theme that comes across strongly in her work with the *Branscombe Project*. The *Napoli* exhibition materialised the memories of locals, and exhibited the pieces of the story as a heritage story for the nation. It became a means through which the geography, history and local memories of this site, were made, re-made and reflected upon, articulating a particular relationship between memory and place (Hoelscher and Aldermam, 2004). The nature of the exhibition was also to present a 'non-national' account sanctioned through conventional practices of heritage writing or political ideology (Hewison, 1987). The *Napoli* wreck itself called for alternative hierarchies and localised conventions that could incorporate radical cultural accounts in tune with rhythms of nature, culture and international trade, located in material lives. 'Post-human', 'post-racial' and 'post-national' accounts could be embraced as part of new artefactual collages of history and heritage (Anderson, 2003). And these were plural accounts not shackled by bounded senses of national identity linked to blood, soil, nature and sensibilities (Schama, 1995). Both the *Napoli* and *Human Cargo* exhibitions show how cultural narratives through artefact, art and narration are central to the ways that geographies of nation are reproduced and reframed. As geographers, what is striking to us about *Human Cargo* is that all five artists employed 'spatialised vocabularies': Gbadamosi's re-mapping, Kam's treasure map, Cheung's mobile work-place, Jackson's wrecked landscape, and even Bradley's wallpaper (echoing *London Bubble's* use of layerings of meaning in domestic performance spaces). Each explored ways in which times and spaces were, and could be, brought together working through materialities, imaginations, memories, bodies, performance and engagement. And all of their work seemed to be based upon hybrid art/humanities/social science research practice. *The Undesirables*, for example, was a satire in the tradition of William Hogarth, a social comment on the vanities and excesses of 21st century living. For us it showed, first, an experience of abhorrence that commodities travel around the world at this scale and quantity at all, and the excesses of this scale of consumption and production of goods that are fetishised and not always necessary for living. Second, it demonstrated a reaction to the discordancy of these materials *out-of-place*, where they become active pollutants endangering the living nature and the consensual culture of this heritage coastline. Third, Jackson seemed to be reflecting on the partiality of representation; the cavernous distance between visual representation and the material extents of the event; its social and cultural geographies becoming more-than-national, knowable and translatable. In the gallery as much as on the beach, the *Napoli* story attained the proportions of the gigantic, denuding the effectiveness of art, culture and narration. The space-time of the *Napoli* is linked across the centuries to the time of slavery; the spaces of the commodity networks and exploitation of this past are located in a contemporary geography of cargo and shipping. So, finally, Jackson shows us that the material geographies of the *Napoli* and its afterlives subsume the tools we have at hand to recall, retell and record. Here, the materials of heritage, of exhibition and photojournalism are but a small set of reflections on the raft of materials associated with this entirely unexpected event.

6. endnote: writing wrecks...

It's tempting to end by imagining what we've just written and what you've just read as the wrecking of the *Napoli* on the shores of the material geographies literature. Alternatively, we could imagine scavengers on Branscombe beach jemmying open a container to find books and journals full of this literature, washed up onto their lives and landscape. Either way, we could treat this chapter as one of many tendril-like examples of the afterlife of this 'disaster': brought to you by I Cook, DP Tolia-Kelly and MSC Napoli. Certainly, this has been a way to make us think carefully about what to read and how to put arguments together. Framing a review of the *material geographies* 'literature' was a bit of a challenge. Mainly because there isn't a literature, *per se*. So much of geography - given its human/physical character - discusses, fudges and/or ignores its multiple materialities in so many ways. Thus, what we have written here inevitably reflects our own interests, experiences, understandings, politics and practices, the ways these have been influenced from across arts, humanities, and social sciences and how, in turn, these have often been influenced by 'geographical' ideas and have used spatialised vocabularies. We said at the start that we wanted to use the '*Napoli* story' as a focus to "build bridges ... and move discussion forward" (Jackson: 2000, 9). Resisting powerful forces within us to write a journal-type paper *about* the *Napoli*, we instead tried to provide sufficient empirical detail not only to allow us to critically explore three 'main areas' of material geographical work, but also to enable readers with other expertises and concerns to make other senses out of this. Bridge building and discussion movement taking place both in the writing and reading of this chapter. All elements of the afterlives of the 'disaster' we began with. As we finally submit this chapter - beaching it on Dan's desk - we're hoping this experiment has somehow worked...

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